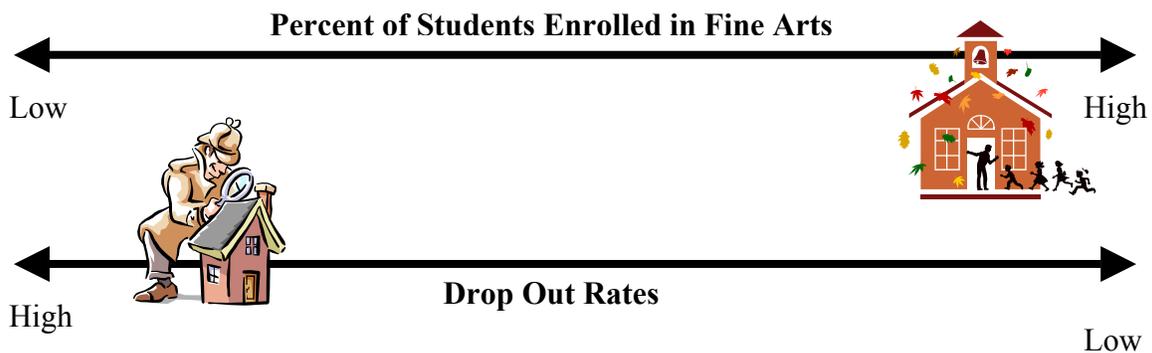
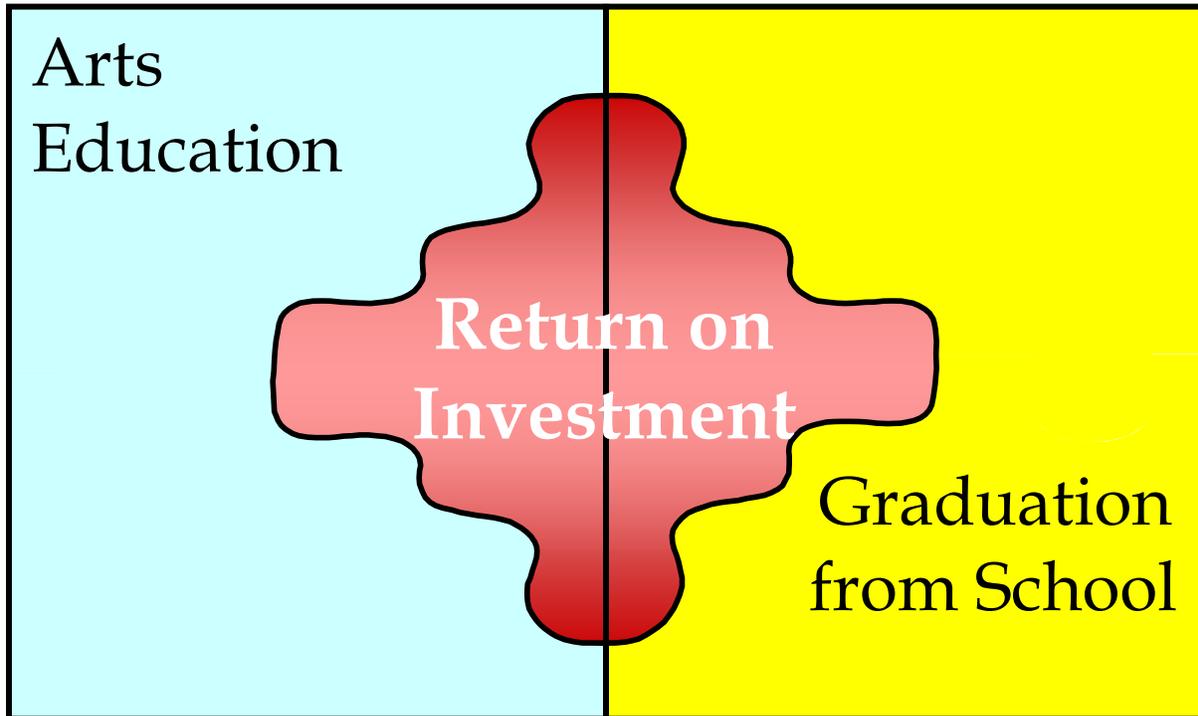


Arts Education Bestows Return on Investment



Where do you want your school to be?

Arts Education and Drop Out Rates

According to a recent study conducted by the Texas Coalition for Quality Arts Education, “Schools that have higher levels of student participation in fine arts receive higher academic scores and have lower drop out rates” (www.tmea.org).

The Texas based study found that schools with the lowest drop out rates on average had 52 percent of their students enrolled in fine arts classes. Schools with the highest drop out rates had only 42 percent of their students enrolled in fine arts courses. In addition, the study found that schools with higher student enrollment in fine arts reported higher attendance rates. Schools with higher student attendance rates received higher academic scores.

Monetary Value of Graduation

Gaining an education brings a monetary reward to society. Research in this area found that students’ increased educational attainment lead to higher earnings/productivity when students went to work in society and to reduced dependence on public services, which saved society money (Bowen, 1977; Catterall, 1987; Levin, 2001).

This research confirmed the importance of education. It attested to the fact that money spent toward educating individuals returns to society in greater amounts. There is a chain of impact—from educational attainment to higher earnings/productivity in society and reduced costs to society. When students drop out of school earnings/productivity in society decrease and costs to society increase.

Catterall (1987) found a tremendous cost to society when students drop out. He reported that a fourth of the nations children were not finishing high school and that numbers abandoning the diploma were increasing. He also found that these numbers were doubled in the nation’s inner cities, making children in cities more at risk.

Among the costs to society for dropouts were higher unemployment rates, lower wages and taxes and a lower productivity rate for the nation. Dropouts were more frequent recipients of welfare and unemployment subsidies and were more likely to engage in criminal activities that lead to direct loses of a social nature to society. Even more troublesome concerning the costs of dropouts is the propensity of adults with less education to have children follow in their educational footsteps. Similarly, language, ethnic minorities and people in poverty were much more likely than others to dropout (p. 21).

Catterall found that for each school year (in 1981-costs would be much higher today), about \$229 billion in lifetime earnings and about \$69 billion in tax revenues for all government levels are lost because of dropouts. In addition to this, Catterall estimated that \$10 billion dollars were lost each year because dropouts

experience added welfare, unemployment compensation, increased crime costs and costs of crime related services and more demands on health services (p. 25).

In a more focused look at the costs of dropouts in the Los Angeles area, Catterall concluded that the costs exceeded \$200,000 per individual dropout.

The Return on Investment of Arts Education

Using the information from the above studies lets draw a connection to the return on investment of arts education. If the costs per student drop out were similar across the United States to the costs identified by Catterall in the Los Angeles area the following conclusion can be made. An arts education program that costs \$1 million annually to operate, would only need to redirect 5 students away from dropping out of school toward a commitment to finish school to pay for or break even on the program. Each drop out would cost the State at least \$200,000. Thus, 5 redirected, better-satisfied and happy graduates would save \$1,000,000 dollars of State money. If the 1 million dollar arts program helped 6 students stay committed to school and graduate, the program would produce a return on investment of 120%. The Texas study found that enrolling 10% more students in fine arts courses decreased student drop outs by much more than 6 students. The connection is clear. Arts education bestows return on investment.

References

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